

It is very important that our country conduct research and development for sources of energy that are alternative to fossil fuels. The research is important for jobs today and jobs for the future. With our national economy for energy well over a trillion dollars a year, it is wise to invest at least a few percent of that amount in developing clean, abundant, environmentally attractive energy sources for the future.

Fusion energy research is showing as much promise and progress as ever. As a result, a number of other countries around the world are investing more and more in fusion, both in their own national research programs and in the multi-billion-dollar international research project ITER, under construction in Europe. They see this research as crucial for their energy future and also enormously valuable to their present overall research infrastructure. The U.S., once the clear international leader in the field and still the home to many of its best scientists and engineers, plays only a fractional role in ITER.

Earlier this year, the President, who often has advanced a wise vision for America's energy policy, now faced with real budget constraints, made what I considered a misguided decision. In his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2013, he proposed increasing US contributions to the ITER project (a good idea) at the expense of the domestic research program (a bad idea).

In effect, the President proposed underfunding U.S. fusion energy research by \$48 million, which would result in closing the MIT fusion research project, curtailing other university and corporate research, and laying off more than 80 people – about one-fifth of the workforce – from the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL), the leading U.S. center for research in the field. These workers – some of the best in the world – come to work in suits, in lab coats, and in jeans and hardhats. They are, in other words, a broad cross-section of the kind of workers we want and need in New Jersey. If these cuts became law, they would debilitate the U.S. fusion program, jeopardizing America's role as a leader in researching clean, sustainable sources of energy.

We should participate vigorously in the international research program, but if we allow our domestic program to atrophy, we can neither contribute much to the international program nor derive much benefit from it. We should be in a position to sell energy technology to other countries, not to have to buy it. It is a big energy market out there, and growing!

As the former assistant director of the PPPL, and as someone who cares deeply about scientific research, I brought together 48 bipartisan members of Congress to oppose the fusion energy cuts. Writing to New Jersey Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen, the chairman of the US House Subcommittee on Appropriations for Energy and Water Development, we said, "Clean energy is an area in which our government can ill-afford to fall behind."

When his committee wrote the Energy Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2013, he chose to restore nearly full fusion funding, which would preserve these jobs in New Jersey and would keep the research underway around the country. On Wednesday this week, I joined Rep. Frelinghuysen and leaders and workers at the PPPL to thank him for his leadership. More work still remains to be done; the Senate must pass an energy funding bill that retains this new funding.

Sharing the Constitution

The U.S. Constitution is, to my mind, the greatest invention of humans: an ingenious system of checks and balances that harnesses the power of individual initiative and enhanced community that has enabled America to grow into the most powerful and beneficial nation on earth.

For many decades now, members of Congress have shared the Constitution with students and citizens by distributing pocket-sized Constitution booklets, containing the entire text of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. I like to tell students it is their copy of both our statement of purpose and the operating manual for the government they are called to run. I point out that the real ingenuity of the Constitution is that it is based, not just on fixed procedures, but on ever-dynamic mechanisms of self-correction and progress toward our ideals of liberty and equality.

Last week, I went to the House floor to point out the ironic fact these booklets are out of print (for reasons political, budgetary, and procedural, beyond what I can explain easily here). I proposed an appropriations amendment, accepted by the Republicans and Democrats, to print again these pocket Constitutions. I will let you know when printing is completed so that you can request a free pocket Constitution of your own; I carry one with me all the time.

Next Week: ☐ Telephone Town Hall on Tuesday, Senior Forum on Friday

Next week, I'll be hosting two forums to share news from Congress and to hear directly from you.

On Tuesday evening at 7:45 p.m., I'll hold a telephone town hall open to all residents of central New Jersey. Many of you will automatically receive calls on Tuesday evening inviting you to join; to ensure that you are called, please visit <http://holt.house.gov/townhall> or call 1-87-RUSH-HOLT.

Then, on Friday, I will host a Senior Forum in Monroe to discuss Social Security and Medicare – how they work, how they can work better, and how we can protect these crucial programs from deterioration or attack.

Senior Forum on Social Security and Medicare

Friday, June 22, 2012

10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Monroe Township Public Library
4 Municipal Plaza
Monroe Township, New Jersey 08831

I'll be joined by Max Richtman, president and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. I hope you will join us and share your questions and concerns!

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress